

4 years' work from one of SA's great painters

KAREN JAROSZYNSKA: Everard Read Gallery

THIS work by one of South Africa's great painters covers a four-year period.

Her paintings and drawings claim our attention on a number of levels — content, technique, use of symbolism, draughtmanship and use of colour. A superb intellect underlies the whole oeuvre as the inner world of a very private person is laid open.

Her subjects are mainly people. Impassive, solid and heavy lidded, her men and women appear to observe the spectator with as much intent as the viewer does them.

They inhabit a fantasy world in which Goyaesque faces emerge from dark backgrounds, a world in which a dog leans pensively over a fence, a horse sits at a table and adults ride rocking horses.

Her puzzling and unusual images, reminiscent of Balthus, are arranged in set tableaux, in undermined time and space. These hieratic figures, placed in strange perspective, in an abrupt sectioning of mass and form, grasp a moment in trembling immobility, unsettling in their mystery.

Images are built up on a thick underbase of impasto. Details are brought out by subtle highlighting, creating a transparency in which the figures are partly ob-

scured, and in which soft blurred edges frequently contrast with hard contours.

This effects a simultaneous experiencing of an outer reality and an interior state suggesting dreams (or nightmares).

Often something appears to project out of the picture plane, in a tour de force of trompe-l'oeil such as the brilliant blue yoyo in "Women with Yoyo". This creates an awareness of the other side of the coin, that all is not as it appears and that, in her paintings, Jaroszynska is holding something back in order to keep us guessing.

She is daring in her use of compositional devices such as the red screen in "The Bethe" which cuts right across the format. This is used again with dramatic effect in "Women on a Balcony" where the large blind echoes the horizontal lines of the deckchairs.

Her superb drawing is manifest in her pen and ink work where marks of the dippen and her attention to fine detail heighten the mood. The strong erotic tension in "In the siesta", however, hardly prepares one for the power and nervous energy of some small brush and ink drawings where nude bodies are vigorously engaged in the act of copulation. In contrast to the brooding passivity of the paintings, it's suddenly all action and convulsive sensuality.

RHODA KRUT

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